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SLEEP PATTERNS AND HEALTH BEHAVIOURS IN MEDICAL STUDENTS

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Aim: The objective of this study was to examine the sleep patterns of medical students and its associations with significant health behaviours.

Methods: Sleep was assessed with a self-response questionnaire covering a wide range of sleep-wake habits and difficulties. A factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed with seventeen items of the questionnaire and four factors were extracted: Sleep Disturbance, Sleep Timing, Insufficient Sleep and Dreams/Nightmares. The questionnaire also included questions on coffee use, cigarette smoking, alcohol intake and physical exercise. The sample consisted of 212 females (M age=20.32 years, SD=1.26) and 128 males (M age=20.19 years, SD=1.23) third year medical students.

Results: Habitual alcohol intake was reported by 6.5% of the students (males=14.8% vs females=1.4%; $p=.000$) and regular physical exercise by 37.9% (males=47.7% vs females=32.1%; $p=.004$); The mean number of coffee cups used per day was 2.16 ± 1.16 (males $M=2.18 \pm 1.35$ vs females $M=2.13 \pm 1.03$; NS) and the mean number of cigarettes smoked per day was 3.69 ± 5.71 (males $M=4.41 \pm 6.55$ vs females $M=3.25 \pm 5.10$; NS). Students who regularly practice physical exercise reported less Sleep Disturbance ($p=.004$). Habitual alcohol intake was significantly associated with Sleep Timing ($p=.051$) and Insufficient Sleep ($p=.007$). Significant correlations were also found between cigarette smoking and Sleep Timing ($p=.000$), Dreams/nightmares ($p=.023$) and Insufficient Sleep ($p=.001$). Coffee use was correlated only with Sleep Timing ($p=.000$).

Conclusion: In this sample of healthy young adults habitual alcohol intake and cigarette smoking was associated with Insufficient Sleep and regular physical exercise was associated with less Sleep Disturbance.